News Release

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR CONTINUES EFFORTS TO EMPOWER WORKERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT PROTECTIONS, BENEFITS

Holds online discussion on caregivers' FMLA barriers, launches new webpage

WASHINGTON – As part of its year-long commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, the U.S. Department of Labor today hosted an online roundtable discussion and launched a new web page to inform workers about federal regulations for job-protected leave to care for a family member.

For 30 years, the FMLA has provided eligible workers with the right to take job-protected leave with the continuation of health benefits so they can care for their family member with serious health conditions or to address a family member's military service. While millions of caregivers have taken advantage of the act's protections, research finds many workers remain unaware of their legal protections under law and others chose not to use the leave, fearful of being treated at work differently.

Today's discussion, "Working While Caring: A Discussion on Barriers to Workplace Leave for Family Caregivers," provided participants with an opportunity to learn about the challenges caregivers face when they must take unpaid leave from work to care for family members. Hosted by the department's Wage and Hour Division, Women's Bureau, Office of Disability Employment Policy, and Veterans' Employment and Training Service, the discussion welcomed workers, employers and representatives from AARP, the American Association of People with Disabilities and Blue Star Families.

"Our nation's family caregivers provide critical care and comfort," said Principal Deputy Wage and Hour Administrator Jessica Looman. "For three decades, the Family and Medical Leave Act has allowed millions of workers to take time away from work to care for their family members without fear of losing their jobs or access to group health insurance. The Wage and Hour Division is committed to empowering workers to take leave to care when they need it."

As part of its ongoing efforts to empower workers to use FMLA-protected leave, the department's Wage and Hour Division has launched a webpage and updated resources to help workers seeking to take time off from work to care for a family member. The site includes the following information:

- A guide on how to talk to your employer about taking job protected FMLA leave.
- Updated fact sheets on using FMLA leave when your family member has a serious health condition, must respond to military service duties, or must care for an adult child with a disability.
- FAQs on taking FMLA leave and other resources for family caregivers to navigate their responsibilities.

"The Family and Medical Leave Act enables the U.S. Department of Labor to support disability-inclusive workplaces, for workers with disabilities and those with family members with disabilities," said Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy Taryn M. Williams. "Workers shouldn't have to choose between their job and managing a serious health condition, nor should they have to choose between their job and caring for a loved one with a serious health condition."

"By some estimates, 60 percent of caregivers also have to work. Since 1993, the Family and Medical Leave Act has provided many people with important protections when they needed it most, but we need to do more," said Women's Bureau Director Wendy Chun-Hoon. "Just as parents with new children have access to paid leave, workers with serious mental or physical illness or those whose aging relatives need care should have the same protections and benefits."

Learn more about the Wage and Hour Division, including its search tool to learn if you are owed back wages collected by the division. For confidential compliance assistance, employees and employers can call the agency's toll-free helpline at 866-4US-WAGE (487-9243), regardless of where they are from. Help ensure hours worked and pay are accurate by downloading the department's Android and iOS Timesheet App for free, also available in Spanish.

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